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DE RUEHBP #0558/01 1651036  
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FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9306  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 0446  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000558

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2018

TAGS: PREL PINS PINR ML

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER OUANE SAYS REGIONAL SECURITY  
SUMMIT ON TRACK

REF: A. BAMAKO 00366

1B. BAMAKO 00507

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: Foreign Minister Moctar Ouane met with Deputy Assistant Secretary Todd Moss and the Ambassador on June 5 to discuss the situation in northern Mali and President Amadou Toumani Toure's plan for a regional Heads of State Summit on Sahel-Saharan security. Ouane described references to a "northern crisis" as misleading because hostilities are limited to a well-defined area north-east of the city of Kidal and involve only a small number of Tuareg bandits. He reiterated support for the Algiers Accords and a negotiated solution, drawing a distinction between Mali's response to renewed Tuareg unrest and that of President Tandja in neighboring Niger. Ouane maintained that Mali has implemented 15 out of 18 components of the Algiers Accords and said the government remains open to discussing the final three items (mixed military units, economic reinsertion payments and Malian troop levels) with Tuareg leaders. Ouane said Mali hoped to hold the Heads of State summit around July 110. DAS Moss asked the Malian government to encourage a more flexible response from President Tandja in Niger and to conduct a full and open inquiry of the April 10 executions in Kidal of two members of the Tuareg rebel Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC). End Summary.

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There Is No Northern Crisis  
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2.(C) Foreign Minister Moctar Ouane told DAS Moss and the Ambassador that Mali was not confronted with a "northern crisis" because Tuareg unrest was limited to a small area to the north-east of the city of Kidal. Ouane described the notion of a crisis in the north as misleading because the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao and most of Kidal remain calm. He said descriptions of the conflict as a "northern" or "Tuareg" crisis implied that the Malian government was opposed to northern or Tuareg populations. He stressed that this was not the case and noted that northern community leaders recently issued a statement distancing themselves from acts of rebellion. Ouane said bandits like Ibrahim Bahanga had no political motivations, had formulated no political demands, and were solely interested in securing a portion of Malian territory for illicit trafficking.

3.(C) Ouane outlined several concessions made by the Malian government in the interests of peace. He drew a clear distinction between Mali's response to Tuareg unrest and that of neighboring Niger, noting that Mali had opted for a political rather than a military solution. To this end, Mali signed the Algiers Accords and agreed to suspend, at the

ADC's request, the dysfunctional regional Assembly in Kidal in July 2006. Ouane argued that the nine person Kidal-based steering committee created by the Accords was still functioning and reiterated a claim made two months ago by Minister of Territorial Administration, General Kafougouna Kone, that Mali had implemented 15 of the Algiers Accord's 18 components (Ref. A).

4.(C) Attacks by Bahanga, said Ouane, have prevented Mali from implementing the three final components of the Accords: economic reinsertion payments for Tuareg youth in Kidal, mixed military units and the reduction of troop levels in the north. "We are ready to discuss these points," said Ouane, "but only within the framework of the Algiers Accords." Ouane maintained that Bahanga remained bound by the Algiers framework because Bahanga was a member of the ADC when the Algiers Accords were signed by ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi in July 2006. Mali and Algeria have each set aside CFA 500 million, for a total of approximately USD 2 million, to finance economic reinsertion payments for Kidal youth once hostilities have subsided and life in Kidal has returned to normal. While Ouane stressed that Mali "has not closed the door" on the controversial mixed military units, he said it was an issue "we have to discuss" with the Tuaregs.

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Regional Security Summit Still On  
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5.(C) Mali appears to be moving ahead with plans for a regional Heads of State summit on Sahel-Saharan security.

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Ouane reported that Mali has received positive responses to President Toure's summit proposal from countries stretching from Mauritania to Sudan and that the summit would likely take place in Bamako during the week of July 10. Mali hopes the summit will produce a political declaration on regional security and a road map for specific ways of combating insecurity in the Sahel. Ouane said the summit would likely be followed by a second conference for regional organizations and international donors.

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U.S. Concerns  
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6.(C) DAS Moss said the U.S. supported Mali's attempts to revive the Algiers framework and that the U.S. will continue to encourage Algeria to play a constructive role as Mali's preferred mediator. He noted that Deputy Secretary Negroponte had recently urged Algerian President Bouteflika to resume mediation efforts. Ouane said the Algerians had told him of this conversation when he was in Algiers. DAS Moss also told the Minister that the U.S. was sending a delegation to Algiers to encourage Algeria to continue its mediation and to better explain U.S. intentions in the region in order to assuage Algerian suspicions.

7.(C) DAS Moss said that the U.S., as a close friend of Mali, was open to other ways it could support the negotiation process and reiterated our offer to provide training for any newly constituted mixed military units. He said he hoped regional leaders would use the Heads of State summit to encourage Niger President Tandja to be more like President Toure in regard to his response to Tuareg unrest. He also urged the Malian government to conduct a full and open inquiry into the April 10 execution of two ADC members in Kidal and noted that credible allegations of human rights violations by members of the Malian military could seriously impact our ability to provide military training in the future. Minister Ouane thanked DAS Moss and the Ambassador for the continued support of the United States and said an investigation into murders was already underway.

Comment: Odds for a Summit

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8.(C) While Minister Ouane's description of hostilities as confined to a small area north-east of Kidal is generally correct, clashes have occurred south of Kidal as well as in the regions of Gao and Segou. Minister Ouane's report of positive feedback from Algeria, Chad, Niger and Mauritania on President Toure's proposed Heads of State summit does not correspond with assessments from others in Bamako regarding regional interest in a high-level security summit (Ref. B). The Malian government appears, however, to be committed to the summit idea and the belief that if President Toure invites regional Heads of State to Bamako, they will come.

9.(U) DAS Moss was not able to clear this message prior to his departure.

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